MY LADY'S KISS

By IZOLA FORRESTER.

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As the coach swung across Dolmar heath, Hastings rode out into the center of the road and halted, silent and expectant, his eyes bright and steady behind his mask. It was nearly an hour past sunset. A nebulous crescent moon half showed above the tops of the chestnuts in Dolmar wood, back of him. Ahead, the west was full of rose color, fading in mid sky to palest opalescent green.

The air was warm and curiously still with the hush of twilight. Only the high call of a night bird from the marsh now and then cut the silence and the hoofbeats of the coach horses on the road. He had waited two hours for the last sound. Ellis and Habbeton had sworn she would pass at 6. She must, if she has changed horses at Wessing. It was 8 by Hastings' watch. He looked at it now leisurely, and as he slipped it back under his cloak the coach stopped short in front of him. There was a leveled pistol in his disengaged hand.

Barnaby was on the box, as Ellis had said he would be. He wished Ellis could have seen the fright in his face now, as he bade him climb down and stand some distance away, up near the sign post, with his hands up.

There was no sign of life from the coach. Lord! but she was a lady of courage. Not a scream, not the faintest cry for help. Hastings rode up to the door and opened it. It was dark within, but he caught a glimpse in the soft, rose light of her face, a white young face, very proud and very angry.

Hastings never hesitated. If it were to be done, he must do it, and be off and away. It would be 11 before he could reach London. Slipping from his horse, he raised his mask and leaned forward in the shadow of the coach toward the white face. He kissed her fairly on the lips, as had been expressly designated; but as he reached for the medallion her hand flashed up from the silk and lace of her cloak, and earth and sky crashed and crumbled in blinding fire and whirring noise for Hastings, as he fell forward into the coach, his head at her feet, and death gripping him fast.

It was night when he became conscious. Cool and chill, too. He did not move, but lay staring upwards, trying to remember. She had shot him. Lord, but she was a fair lady of courage. Shot him down for a highwayman because he had stolen a kiss from her lips. But he had kissed her all the same, and the winnings were his. It was late. The pain in his head was sharp, and there was a sting somewhere in his left shoulder, too. He must manage to get up and find Kit, his mare, and get back. Ellis and Habbeton were to meet him at the sign of the Dancing Bear at daybreak.

He sat up stiffly, his hands gripping straw and chilly stones, instead of the soft turf of Dolmar heath. He saw the barred square of moonlight above his head and understood. He was in jail. My lady's courage had carried her farther than mere bullets. Highwaymen who stole kisses must be jailed. He laughed grimly, and wondered if he was to be hung also. My lady's kisses came dear. Yet not so dear. It had been a sweet kiss for all that.

A key scraped in the lock, and there was the yellow gleam of a lantern when the door half opened.

"I will keep the light," said a voice. "And if I should call, come quickly."

The door was closed, and Hastings stood up from the straw bed, and bowed his head, dizzy and wild in its pain as from a fever. But he knew her in spite of the long cloak and hood. The hand that held the lantern up was small and firm and white.

"You are better?" Her tone was one of surprise.

"Thank you, my lady, I am somewhat better," said Hastings. "I fancied I was dead."

"I hoped you were by this." Her voice was low. She set the lantern down on the stool and loosened the hood so that it fell back from her face. "It would have been better."

"No thanks to your lady that I am not." Hastings bowed once more and stood erect, weak and somewhat hostile. She flushed, and raised her chin a trifle higher.

"I was hasty. I did not wish to kill you."

"But you thought I was better dead?" Her lips parted in a half smile.

"Highwaymen do not rob as you do. I would not have shot you if you had stolen my purse."

"And if I had but stolen your purse you would not have come here tonight."

She did not answer for a moment. He watched the sparkle of anger leap to her eyes at his words, and her hand moved toward the lantern. Suddenly she looked in his eyes again, and the anger had left her own. There was a sweet solemnity in her voice and manner as she said:

"They will hang you at noon tomorrow."

"Have you come to tell me that?"

His tone was light and cruel. She answered gravely and haughtily:

"I came to tell you, yes. Because I have said that you were a robber, and should die. But I have thought since then, and I am in doubt as to whether you are or not. Have you no friends who would come to you? I will see that a message reaches them."

He smiled. His friends! Ellis and Habbeton jesting and roystering in the little side room at the Dancing Bear, waiting for him to come and join them, toss the medallion on the table and claim the wager fairly won. A message of distress to them, from a condemned highwayman lying in Wessing jail, would but increase the jest.

"My friends would not care to be annoyed," he said. "Thank you for your pity, my lady."

"But"—— Her hands held the edges of her long cloak tightly, as she gazed at him frowningly. "You are no highwayman. Why did you do it?"

His heart beat faster at the challenge. Why had he? He looked at the tall, slender figure, at the pride in the curve of cheek and chin, and sweet, close mouth. The clear, blue eyes that met his own so fairly were those of a brave opponent.

"I did it"—he spoke quickly, recklessly caring for nothing except to let her know the truth if she would. It could not matter now. At noon they were to hang him. "I did it for no reason but adventure. Yesterday I came into London, a stranger, a hopeful one, with somewhat more nerve than common sense. It is a failure we have, my lady, up in Northumberland. I count the Hotspur as a kinsman. And being strange, I fell in with two youngsters of the court. Your cousin, Ellis of Hexham was one. Habbeton was the other."

"My Lord Habbeton!" A sudden understanding flashed in her eyes. "He told you?"

"He told me the loveliest, proudest woman in London town was the Lady Beatrix Cheyne." Hastings bowed his head with merry grace. "He told me the Lady Beatrix boasted that no man had ever kissed her lips, and the matter was a standing wager in the town, and at court, that the man who should bear proof that he had kissed the Lady Beatrix's lips—her lips, it was expressly designated"— He paused, with a half apologetic glance. She flushed, but did not speak. "That man's fortune was assured. He would be acclaimed the bravest man in London, and the luckiest. I swore that before break of day I would bring back proof. Ellis gave me directions, the route of the coach and what to bring. The proof was to be the medallion or yourself which you wear on your breast."

Her hand sought the medallion half unconsciously as it lay among the laces of her bodice.

"It was a brave boast." He caught the sting of scorn in her tone.

"Braver than seeking purses, my lady," he laughed. "The only thing the youngsters did not tell me was that the Lady Beatrix travels armed."

She lifted her lashes proudly and looked at him.

"My Lord Habbeton is somewhat bitter over his own failure at winning the wager. He has taken a poor revenge." Slowly her fingers unpinned the medallion from her breast and held it out to him. "I am minded to be revenged on him. You may take that back to town with you and tell him you have won the wager."

"I would rather hang at noon tomorrow."

"You cannot hang unless I bear witness against you that you are a highwayman, and stole from me."

"I stole the kiss."

"Then I will swear it was not stolen." Her glance fell before his for the first time. She took up the lantern and hesitated. When one has shot a man for so slight a thing, and the man happens to fall at one's very feet, and one takes him in one's own carriage that he may receive help at once, and has time to think upon his death, it is most pitiful. My father waits for me. Will you come free, Sir Highwayman?"

She opened the door, and held the lantern up for him to see his way. When he reached her side, he stopped.

"I am not penitent, and deserve no pardon. If it were to do again, I should do it."

She laughed softly, and drew the hood of her cloak up over her brown hair.

"Then is the medallion twice won. I am unarmed."

And he took the lantern from her hand and kissed her upon the lips, as had been expressly designated in the wager at the Sign of the Dancing Bear, and she laid the medallion in his hand.

OUR SCHOOLS.

CHESAPEAKE CITY—HIGH.

Report for December—

Honor Roll—Class of 1905.

Clarence Noland	97.3
Warren Barwick	96.9
Mame Bouchelle	96.2
Charles Ellison	93.7

Class of 1906.

Mamie Thornton	97.9
Anna George	97.7
Mary Baker	96.4
Mary Allen	96.3
Sadie Fillingame	96.0
Elizabeth Cooling	95.0
William Shaeffer	94.6
Margaret Johnson	94.4
Louisa Tatman	94.1
Byron Rhoades	93.4

Class of 1907.

Sylvia Townsend	98.5
Bessie Barwick	98.2
Helen Davidson	98.2
Charles Shaeffer	98.2
Ernest Townsend	98.2
Georgia Ellison	97.8
Marion Boulden	97.7
Nathan Carter	95.5
Thomas Savin	95.3
Leroy Allen	92.2
Nelson Cooling	91.5

Class of 1908.

John Hopper	99.0
Mary Sanders	99.0
Dora Morgan	96.1
Clayton Ellison	93.6
Dora Tumey	91.4
James Vaughn	90.3
Carroll Wooleyhan	85.6

Special Students.

Louise Boulden	98.0
Zack Loveless	95.3
Ward Beaston	92.1

ELKTON SCHOOL NO. 11.

Averages for December—

Sixthgrade—Hiram Dunbar, 99.4; H. Wilson, 99.4; Laura Deputy, 98.8; Elizabeth Scott, 98.4; Ruth Gifford, 98.3; Ellis Mahan, 98.3; Martie Bowland, 98.2; Charles Rambo, 98.1; Elizabeth Perkins, 98; Blanche Ball, 97.7; Willie Fenton, 97.4; Howard Jones, 97.2; Mabel Taylor, 96.7; Eugene Gonce, 96.6; Roy Clark, 96.5; Emma Minster, 95.1; Elizabeth Pierson, 95.

Fifth grade—Helen Cooper, 100; Edna Cleaves, 99.8; Clarence Rambo, 99.6; Esther Terrell, 99.5; Warren Boulden, 99.5; Mary Mahan, 99.4; Alice Whihteman, 99.3; Ruth Price, 99.1; Eleanora Zolper, 98.7; Stella Rambo, 98.5; Florence Clark, 98; Alice McGready, 97.5; Herbert Morgan, 96.9; Roger Witworth, 96.8; Howard Parker, 96.2; Emmaleen Zolper, 95.8; Theodore Parker, 95.1; Ralph Freeman, 95.

Fourth grade—Emily Frazer, 98.4; M. Karl, 98.2; Lydia Groves, 98; Carolyn Couden, 97.7; Charles Hemphill, 97.3; Eddie Brown, 97; John Karl, 97; Susie Booth, 96.6; Edward Duffy, 96.6; Marie Taggart, 96.3; Joseph McGready, 95.6; Crystal Moore, 95.1.

Third grade—Charles Wells, 95; Kenneth Lancaster, 95.

CECILTON.

Averages for December—

Tenth grade—Ella Cannan, 99.8; Sadie Cannan, 9906; Grace Burris, 97.8; Annie Alderson, 96.8.

Ninth grade—Belle Price, 96.3.

Elghth grade—Marion Cannan, 99.2; Annie Price, 98.7; Willie Anderson, 98.5.

Seventh grade (H. S.)—Ionia Benson, 96.9; Eugene Dawson, 96.4.

Seventh grade (G. S.)—Mary Blackway, 97.9; Reba Burris, 97.8; Ashley Taylor, 96.7; Clifton Burke, 96.5.

Sixth grade—Georgia Walmsley, 97.4; Myra Dawson, 95.

Fifth grade—Regina Price, 97; Elma Taylor, 96.8; Jane Smith, 95.

Fourth grade—Nellie Anderson, 99.6; Miriam Griffith, 99.5; Wilma Milliken, 98.3; Isabel Griffith, 98; Ruth Alderson, 99.1; Lelia Burke, 96.8.

Third grade—Henry W. Davis, 99.7; Ada Davis, 97; Crawford Short, 96.3.

Second grade—Elizabeth Lusby, 99.1; Ethel Luthringer, 95.1; Violet Bennett, 95.

CHESAPEAKE CITY.—PUBLIC.

Averages for December—

Seventh grade—Harold Carter, 98.4; Ray Hallman, 97.6; Joe Savin, 96.6; G. Borem, 96.2; Anna Heylow, 96; Augusta Egee, 95.4; Irvin Griffith, 95.1; Elizabeth Tatman, 95.1; Rachel Loveless, 95.

Sixth grade—Elizabeth Rhoades, 98; Elva Tumey 98; Mamie Jefferson, 97.5; Mary Barwick, 95.3; Harriett Pearce, 95.7; Edith Tumey, 96.5; Warren Bristow, 96.1; George Fillingame, 96; Helen Titter, 95.1; Nelson Armbrester, 95.

Fifth grade—Parker Nowland, 98.7; Gertrude Carter, 98.1; Katie Lotman, 98.1; Lulu Bristow, 97.6; Lidie Sager, 97.4; Ruth Morgan, 97.4; Evelyn Spear, 96.4; Claude Lake, 96.2; Charles Stapp, 96.1; Willie Hudson, 95.5; Linden Bell, 95.4.

Fourth grade—Cena Pierce, 96.4; David Savin, 96; Nellie Spear, 95.8; Maggie Lum, 95.1.

Third grade—Mamie Boulden' 97.5; Ronald Carpenter, 96; Herbert Bell, 96; George Biddle, 96; Emma Bedwell, 95.5.

WHITEOAK SCHOOL.

Averages for December—

Seventh grade—Tillie Churchman, 99.5; Florence McDowell, 99.3; Joseph McVey, 99; Leslie Pyle, 99; Helen Ostrander, 98.7; Thomas Allen, 98.6.

Sixth grade—Edna Rock, 98.3; Mercie McDowell, 97.2; Helen McDowell, 97.2; Irene Fitzgerald, 96.2; Elsie England, 96; Mary Lair, 95; Ralston England, 93.2; Albert England, 92.6.

Fourth grade—Norman England, 99; Margaret Creswell, 98.8; Alfaretta Watson, 98.1; Willie Rock, 97.8; Paul England, 97.6; Norman Pyle, 96.8; Miller McDowell, 96.5; Roland England, 95.8; Clinton England, 95.1; Wilmer McDowell, 95.

Second grade—Hannah Crothers, 99.5; Clara England, 99.5; Rachel Rock, 99.1. Margaret England, 97.7; Warren England, 97.2; Harold England, 97; Newton McDowell, 90.7.

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